

Message Text

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TAGS: PINS PINT GH
SUB: KOFI AWOONOR'S TRIAL

REF: ACCRA 6358

1. SUMMAR: KOFI AWOONOR TESTIFIED IN OPEN COURT AUGUST
26 THAT HE HAD BEEN THREATENED WITH TORTURE IF HE DID NOT
ADMIT TO KNOWING OF A PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO
TESTIFIED
THAT HE HAD SEEN CAPTAIN TSIKATA, A DEFENDANT AT THE MOST
RECENTLY CONCLUDED SUBVERSION TRIAL, BEING CARRIED FROM
INTERROGATION SESSIONS SHOWING OBVIOUS SIGNS OF TORTURE.END
SUMMARY.

2. TESTIFYING AT A SPECIAL HEARING CALLED TO DETERMINE
WHETHER A STATEMENT HE MADE JANUARY 10 TO SPECIAL BRANCH OFFICERS
IS ADMISSABLE AT HIS TRIAL, AWOONOR STATED THAT HE HAD
GIVEN A STATEMENT DECEMBER 31, THE DAY OF HIS ARREST, AFTER
HIS INITIAL INTERROGATION BY SPECIAL BRANCH. THIS STATEMENT
WAS APPARENTLY NOT SUFFICIENTLY INCRIMINATING BECAUSE
SPECIAL BRANCH OFFICERS INTERROGATED HIM AGAIN JANUARY
2, 8, AND 10 DEMANDING THAT HE MAKE A STATEMENT ADMITTING THAT
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HE KNEW OF A PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT. THESE DEMANDS

WERE ACCOMPANIED BY THREATS OF TORTURE. ON JANUARY 10 HE GAVE SPECIAL BRANCH THE STATEMENT THAT IS NOW IN DISPUTE.

3. IN THE COURSE OF HIS TESTIMONY AWOONOR SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN KEPT IN A CELL AT SPECIAL BRANCH HEADQUARTERS THAT WAS DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM CAPTAIN TSIKATA'S. ON THE NIGHT OF HIS ARREST, AWOONOR SAID HE HEARD TSIKATA MOANING THAT HE HAD BEEN TORTURED. WHEN AWOONOR SAW HIM THE NEXT DAY, TSIKATA'S HEAD WAS SWOLLEN AND HE HAD BLOOD SOAKED COTTON IN HIS EARS. AWOONOR TESTIFIED THAT ON JANUARY 8 HE SAW TSIKATA CARRIED BACK FROM AN INTERROGATION SESSION AND THAT ON JANUARY 9 TSIKATA WAS RETURNED TO HIS CELL WITH BLOOD COVERING HIS EYES AND OOZING FROM HIS NOSTRILS.

4. AWOONOR'S TESTIMONY CAME AFTER THE COURT HAD SAT IN CAMERA TO TAKE TESTIMONY FROM TWO GOVERNMENT WITNESSES ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING AWOONOR'S JANUARY 10 STATEMENT.

5. COMMENT: IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED IN GHANA THAT SPECIAL BRANCH IS NOT LOATHE TO USE COERCION TO OBTAIN INFORMATION, SO THE SUBSTANCE OF AWOONOR'S TESTIMONY IS NOT SURPRISING. WHAT IS SURPRISING IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED GHANAIAAN TIMES PRINTED A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF IT IN ITS AUGUST 27 EDITION. THE DAILY GRAPHIC WAS MUCH MORE CURCUMSPECT IN ITS COVERAGE OF AWOONOR'S TESTIMONY, REPORTING AWOONOR AS SAYING THAT HIS GUARDS THREATENED TO BEAT HIM IF HE DID NOT GIVE A STATEMENT AND THAT THE BOARD COMPLETED HIM TO MAKE THE JANUARY 10 STATEMENT. NO COVERAGE WAS GIVEN TO AWOONOR'S TESTIMONY ABOUT TSIKATA.
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